

# 2016

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Washington  
Department of  
**FISH and  
WILDLIFE**



## **DISTRICT 7 HUNTING PROSPECTS**

Chelan and Douglas counties

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## BE AWARE OF FIRE CONDITIONS

This report was written before the full extent of this year's wildfires in northcentral and northeast Washington was known. We will update this information as soon as possible after the fires subside and their impact on hunting opportunities becomes clear.

While the department currently has no plans to close any hunting seasons due to wildfires, access restrictions are in place on many public and private lands in these areas. Wherever you choose to hunt, be sure to check on fire conditions, access restrictions and other emergency rules before you head out.

For more information see:

- [Wildfire status updates](#)
- [Northwest Interagency Coordination Center](#)
- [Chelan County Emergency Management](#)
- [Okanogan County Emergency Management](#)
- [Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest](#)

## DISTRICT 7 GENERAL OVERVIEW

Split in two by the Columbia River and comprised of Chelan and Douglas counties, the Wenatchee District is at the heart of Washington State. From the crest of the Cascade Range to the shrub-steppe of the Columbia Basin, District 7 offers an incredibly diverse range of habitats and hunting opportunities. Hunters in District 7 have access to a variety of small and big game species, with hunting opportunities ranging from agricultural fields and sagebrush to alpine basins tucked away deep in the wilderness.

Douglas County, the eastern half of the district, is a plateau of shrub-steppe, farmlands, and deep basalt coulees. Ownership is mostly private, yet Douglas County offers incredible opportunities to hunt a variety of species. Hunters seeking pheasant, quail, doves, gray partridge, chukar, and mule deer will find ample areas to hunt across the county. Game management units in Douglas County are 248 (Big Bend), 254 (Saint Andrews), 260 (Foster Creek), 262 (Withrow), 266 (Badger), and 269 (Moses Coulee).

Chelan County descends from a high point of 9,500 feet along the Cascade Crest in the west downward to the Columbia River, its eastern boundary. Composed of five mountain ranges (Sawtooth, Chelan, Entiat, Chiwaukum, and Wenatchee) providing unlimited terrain, the county raises less than 800 feet at its lowest point along the Columbia River, roughly 40 miles east.

Home to some of the best mule deer hunting in the state, Chelan County is a destination for many hunters. With its large public land base, the county offers almost unlimited opportunity to find a place of your own. Four of the state's six high deer hunt wilderness areas are in Chelan County, as well as three bighorn sheep herds and an increasing mountain goat population. Game management units in Chelan County are 243 (Manson), 244 (Clark), 245 (Chiwawa), 246 (Slide Ridge), 247 (Entiat), 249 (Alpine), 250 (Swakane), 251 (Mission).

### CURRENT SPECIES STATUS

**Big Game:** Almost all the deer harvested in District 7 are mule deer, with a few white-tailed deer harvested as well. Lesser known is that there are black-tailed deer in Chelan County, and that the mule deer share more black-tailed genes than hunters realize. Elk are present primarily along the southern edge and central portions of Chelan County. Our elk are the northern extension of the Colockum Herd, centered to the south in Kittitas County. Black bears roam across almost all habitats in Chelan County. Their densities are higher in the wetter timbered habitats near the crest of the Cascades, and at somewhat lower densities in drier habitats farther east. Hunters harvest few black bears in Douglas County, but they do occur in small numbers in brush filled riparian draws along the Columbia River and other drainages. Cougars occupy all the habitats where deer and elk are located, and while most cougar harvests take place during deer and elk seasons, the cougar population goes under harvested in most years. There are three California bighorn sheep herds in the district, including the Swakane, Chelan Butte, and Manson. The

world's record California bighorn sheep came out of the Swakane herd in Chelan County in 2010. Mountain goats occupy most all of the high elevation habitat in Chelan County's mountains, and numbers are increasing.

**Upland birds:** Upland bird hunting is available across the district. Turkey hunting occurs mainly in Chelan County, but numbers are growing in northern Douglas County. Hunt-able grouse species are in forested environments in both counties. Hunters can pursue sooty, dusky, spruce, and ruffed grouse in different parts of the district. The three other grouse species, greater sage grouse, sharp-tailed grouse, and white-tailed ptarmigan, are protected species in Washington. Chukar partridge require hunters to climb steep ridgelines and traverse rocky slopes to bag their quarry. Valley quail, as their name suggests, prefer gentler terrain and usually stay in greater numbers near agricultural areas. Gray partridge, or hunks, are found primarily in Douglas County. Doves are hunted in both counties, but most of the success is from Douglas County. There are two ring-necked pheasant release sites in Chelan County (Swakane and Chelan Butte wildlife areas), but Douglas County has self-sustaining populations where hunters are most successful.

**Small Game:** Coyotes are the most widely adaptable species in the state, and as such, found most anywhere. Bobcats are another widely distributed species hunted across a wide range of hunting areas from high mountains to dry shrub-steppe. Fox are not a species that many hunters pursue, and some hunters may not know that Washington has a protected fox species called the cascade red fox, which is rare across the west. Raccoons are almost everywhere, except the highest peaks and the driest desert. Crows are another small game species available, and likely little pursued. Rabbits and hares offer hunting opportunity throughout the district, with snowshoe hares at higher elevations (mainly in Chelan County) and cottontail rabbits in a variety of habitats in both Douglas and Chelan counties.

**Waterfowl:** Ducks and geese offer opportunities in different portions of the district. The bulk of the waterfowl hunting is along the Columbia River, with ducks being the primary focus. Goose hunts are mainly in Douglas County, but opportunities are also available along the Columbia River.

## WILDFIRE

Fire is a natural part of the vegetation communities in eastern Washington and a common occurrence in the Wenatchee District, involving both timbered and shrub-steppe habitats each year. Summer and fall are our primary fires seasons and this reoccurring pattern fire on dry landscapes has shaped the tree, shrub, and grass species that provide habitat for the game we hunt. A range of species as diverse as mountain goats to valley quail can either benefit or suffer from a fire within habitat. Species are also impacted by excluding fire from landscapes where it normally plays a dominate role in maintaining habitat quality.



In recent years, fire has received a lot of attention in the district, as wildfires have threatened residences, property, and habitat not only in remote areas but also near larger communities. The combination of drier weather, changing vegetation, and the threat of multiple fire-start triggers (natural and human-caused) seem to have increased not only the numbers of fires, but also the reoccurrence of fires on recently burned habitat. While the history of wildfires in the district is not complete, we know there have been over 120 documented and recorded wildfires since 1912 in Chelan County. The smallest recorded fire was just two acres, and the largest over 139,000 acres. Roughly 686,500 acres of habitat have burned during that time in Chelan County alone, with many of those acres burning multiple times. The documented history of wildfire in Douglas County is less complete, mainly due to the amount of private lands in the county and multiple firefighting responders, but the same patterns and trends exist.

The dangers of active fires and conditions remaining post-fire make land management and public safety a difficult issue for responsible agencies. Following a fire, many areas have restricted access due to safety and resource concerns, and because fire season precedes and/or overlaps hunting seasons, hunter's plans may be impacted. Even when fires have been contained, or the fire is officially out, the impacts of fire and firefighting can and will restrict access in some areas. Road systems used to transport heavy equipment, gear, and firefighters during operations degrade despite best efforts, and in many instances, are unrepaired before hunting seasons open. Hunters need to expect access restrictions in areas of wildfire activity and plan accordingly.

It is smart to start making plans early, and to monitor conditions and access by contacting agencies and landowners. Cities, counties, companies, and resource management agencies all can place unexpected access restrictions on roads and hunting lands. Make plans, but also have an alternate plan in your back pocket in case conditions change and your new or favorite hunting area is closed. Remember, hunting seasons, game management units, and permit areas provide hunting opportunities, not guarantees. WDFW sets hunting seasons across the entire state with few restrictions in place. However, local laws, ordinances, and policies set by landowners and jurisdictions supersede WDFW hunting seasons.

## **Resources Management Agency Web Sites**

Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife

<http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/>

Washington State Department of Natural Resources

<http://www.dnr.wa.gov/>

Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest

<http://www.fs.usda.gov/okawen/>

Bureau of Land Management

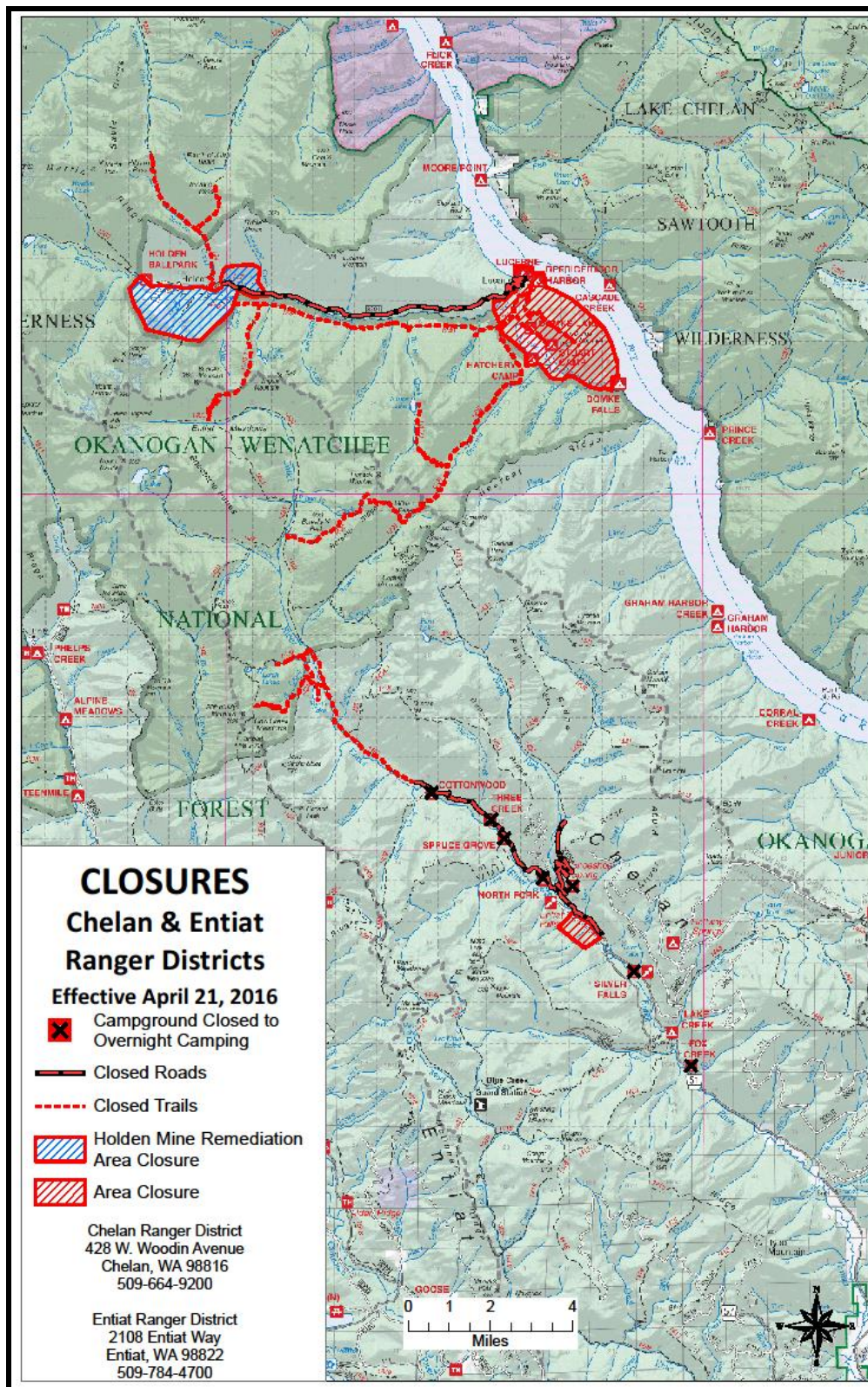
<http://www.blm.gov/or/districts/spokane/index.php>

Chelan County

<http://www.co.chelan.wa.us/>

Douglas County

<http://www.douglascountywa.net/>



A map of the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest's entry closures dated 21 April 2016. This is the most recent information available for this document. Contact the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest for updated entry and road closure information when planning your fall hunts.



## ELK

Almost the entire harvest of elk in the Wenatchee District comes from part of the Colockum herd in Chelan County. A few elk harvests are scattered across Douglas County each season, but that harvest is not consistent from year to year. Liberal harvest seasons are in place in Douglas County to keep elk from establishing herds in the farming dominated landscape where their presence is unwelcome. The Colockum Herd is currently over its population management objective at an estimated number of 5,500-6,500 elk. While Chelan County elk are the northern extension of the Colockum herd, numbers, if increasing, have not been documented through formal surveys. Anecdotal information suggests that numbers may be increasing in the southeastern portion of the Stemilt Basin north of the Kittitas County line, but in reality, it is more likely the redistribution of elk into the area south of Jumpoff Ridge following reductions in permit seasons.

Hunters harvest roughly 45-55 elk under general seasons in Chelan County each year. Antlerless harvest varies year to year with the amount of harvest focus placed on local elk to combat damage. Success rates between weapon types vary and overall success varies from year to year. In 2015, muzzleloader hunters had a 9% success rate, while archers had a 5% success rate and modern firearms hunters 5%. Hunters with multi-season tags have the greatest hunter success rates, with 14% of the hunters bringing home an elk in 2014. Success for these hunters is not available for the 2015 season. Most of the harvested elk come out of GMU 251, with the remaining few harvested in GMUs 244, 245, and 249, and very small numbers coming inconsistently out of other GMUs.

The past change to a true spike rule for the Colockum has shown increases in escapement of yearling bulls. Mature bulls use a portion of Chelan County as security and wintering habitat. Recent research has expanded understanding of the Colockum Herd, and there are plans to look deeper into the ecology of the adult bull portion of the population.

Elk in GUMs 245 and 249 occur at low densities and in small-dispersed bands. Local hunters that live and work the area are often the hunters that prove to be most successful in harvesting these elk. Elk hunting in GMU 249 consists of a large block of public land and is within the USFS Alpine Lakes Wilderness. While the GMU offers an opportunity for an over the counter archery tag for a branch-antlered bull, elk are at very low densities and occupy extremely rugged terrain that does not allow the use of motorized vehicles. Hunters participating in the GMU 249 archery season report surprise at the numbers of other hunters chasing their elk. Hunters in 2015 took multiple bulls from this unit.

GMU 251 offers elk opportunity throughout the majority of the unit. However, elk density is not very high and varies from place to place. General seasons fall under antler restrictions that make harvesting spike elk more challenging. Harvest occurs across the GMU, with the majority of the elk hunting occurring between Blewett Pass to the west, the city of Wenatchee to the east, and

the mountainous and timbered habitat south of State Highway 2. The Mission Unit does have a significant amount of private lands and hunters need to know property boundaries when hunting elk near private ownership.

Hunters will again notice the absence of the September general cow elk hunt in former Elk Area 2033, which was discontinued in 2015. This hunt was established to allow orchard owners in a small portion of the district impacted by elk damage to put pressure on the herd during early fall. While the hunt was helpful, the annual harvest, as well as depredation reports, has decreased over time. Changes within WDFW have allowed us to place a Conflict Specialist position in the district. We now have dedicated personnel to work with commercial producers to minimize damage from deer and elk, thereby eliminating the need for a broader depredation focused season.

Figures 11 and 12 (listed in the Figures section) are maps of WDFW Elk Areas 2032 (Malaga) and 2051 (Tronsen). These are the only Elk Areas in Chelan County, and correspond to permit opportunities and hunt restrictions for the 2016 season.

	Antlerless Harvest	Antlered Harvest	Total Harvest	1 Point	2 Point	3 Point	4 Point	5 Point	6+ Point
<b>District 7</b>									
<b>GMU 243</b>	0	0	<b>0</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>GMU 244</b>	1	0	<b>1</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>GMU 245</b>	1	0	<b>1</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>GMU 246</b>	1	2	<b>3</b>	2	0	0	0	0	0
<b>GMU 247</b>	0	0	<b>0</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>GMU 248</b>	0	0	<b>0</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>GMU 249</b>	0	7	<b>7</b>	0	0	0	0	0	7
<b>GMU 250</b>	0	2	<b>2</b>	0	0	0	0	0	2
<b>GMU 251</b>	38	44	<b>82</b>	41	0	0	0	0	3
<b>GMU 254</b>	0	0	<b>0</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0

GMU 262	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
GMU 266	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
GMU 269	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
District 7 Totals									
TOTALS	41	55	96	43	0	0	0	0	12

**Table 1.** District 7 Harvest by GMU.

## DEER



Mule deer hunting is the bread and butter of the Wenatchee District. While the district does support a few white-tailed deer, mule deer dominate the attention from hunters. Chelan County has become a destination hunt for many mule deer enthusiasts across Washington, with late season limited entry permits being highly prized. Within District 7, a hunter has the opportunity

to pursue deer across a range of habitats, including high alpine basins along the crest of the Cascades or expanses of sagebrush in Douglas County.

This should be another great opportunity year for harvesting adult bucks in Chelan County. The management goal of a minimum of 25 bucks per 100 does post-season, as well as retaining a high ratio of adult bucks in the population, has been successful thus far. Survey numbers in Douglas County were encouraging, with overall buck to doe ratios above objective. Without the diverse cover provided by mountains and forests, buck escapement is lower in the sagebrush, and only 26% of the surveying bucks were mature. Productivity remains good in Douglas County, with a fawn to doe ratio of 59 fawns per 100 does, which is average for these units. This herd is increasing in size and will provide excellent hunting opportunity during general and antlerless permit seasons.

Weather conditions have been a major factor in completing aerial surveys each winter. In 2015-2016, we altered our approach to focus on a spring population estimate, where weather is less likely to limit survey opportunities. Surveys flown returned a population estimate of roughly 15,000 deer in Chelan County south of Lake Chelan. These numbers align with our previous population estimates of 15,000 and 18,000 deer in the same area, and support other measures, indicating that deer numbers are stable. In future years, we will continue to test this new process of spring surveys combined with limited fall/winter surveys, hoping to avoid the year-to-year variability in weather conditions.

Hunters took 2,549 deer off the district in 2015, including 2,256 bucks and 293 antlerless. The highest harvest came from GMU 247 in Chelan County, with 473 deer, and from GMU 248 in Douglas County, with 290 deer. Harvest of antlerless deer was consistent between years, which is not surprising with permit allocation regulating that component of the deer harvest each year. What was dramatic was the 33 percent (566 deer) increase in the antlered harvest on the district between 2014 and 2015. Chelan County showed a 42 percent increase in harvest while Douglas County showed a 23 percent increase. Harvest in both counties has been increasing since 2011, with the most dramatic increases seen during the last two years.

Douglas County is a consistent producer of mule deer opportunity, and conditions should be similar in 2016. Unlike Chelan County, lands in Douglas County are mostly in private ownership, and as such, access controls the amount of impact a hunting season has on the population. Douglas County is composed of relatively open habitat with an extensive road network. These factors make deer more vulnerable than in the rugged, closed canopy, mountainous terrain of the Cascades.

The increased harvest in 2015 was part of a larger trend that included not only eastern Washington, but portions of Idaho and Oregon as well. We have had a series of wild winters and our harvest was not only the product of improved fawn survival, but also the recruitment of young deer into older age classes. If you look through the table below, you will see the



significant increase in harvest numbers in both counties. You also see that the percent of 3-point, 4-point, or 5-point deer harvested remained comparable. However, it also shows an increased harvest of 4-point and 5-point deer over 3-point deer, meaning that a good fawn production and recruitment year was moving through the population, resulting in a great year in 2015.

When we look at hunter numbers, hunter effort and success rates, we see that a similar number of hunters spent a similar number of days hunting between 2014 and 2015, yet hunter success rates increased roughly 5% or more, and hunters spent on average 4-5 days less per harvest in 2015. All these measures indicate that more deer were available to hunters in 2015, and hunters took advantage of the opportunity at hand. Harvest of older age-class deer should be flatter in 2016, given success rates last year, and hunters should expect leaner buck numbers than 2015. The core of the population is stable, and harvest of excess bucks does not change the direction of the population. Deer populations have the characteristic of responding quickly to favorable conditions, and because Chelan County has not suffered large-scale habitat alteration, buck numbers should bounce back from the pressure of the 2015 harvest quickly.

	Antlered Harvest	Antlered harvest by point class			% antlered harvest by point class		
		3	4	5+	3	4	5+
Chelan County							
2,014	921	372	332	217	40.4	36.0	23.6
2,015	1,311	491	505	315	37.5	38.5	24.0
Change	390	119	173	98	-2.9	2.5	0.5
%Change	<b>42</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>-7.3</b>	<b>6.9</b>	<b>2.0</b>
Douglas County							
2,014	755	400	269	86	53.0	35.6	11.4
2,015	928	469	348	111	50.5	37.5	12.0
Change	173	69	79	25	-2.4	1.9	0.6
%Change	<b>23</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>-4.6</b>	<b>5.3</b>	<b>0.1</b>
District Total							
2,014	1,690	772	601	303	45.7	35.6	17.9
2,015	2,256	960	853	426	42.6	37.8	18.9
Change	566	188	252	123	-3.1	2.2	1.0
%Change	<b>33</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>-6.8</b>	<b>6.3</b>	<b>0.1</b>

**Table 2.** Comparisons of antlered deer harvest by point class, and percent harvest by point class between 2014 and 2015 for District 7, Chelan County, and Douglas County.

The general modern firearm seasons seem to have been unseasonably warm and dry over the past few years, making deer hunting tough. This year in particular, drought conditions could prove

challenging for deer hunting in the Cascades. Under these drier conditions, deer push harder to find quality vegetation for forage, possibly altering their normal behavior and distribution on the landscape. The Chelan County mule deer herd is migratory, spending winters on the breaks along the Columbia River, but dispersing into the large expanse of the Cascades during summer.

As early as mid-September, deer start responding to changes in vegetation by moving downward in elevation and occupying north facing slopes where conditions are cooler and wetter and forage is of better quality. From mid-September through the onset of winter, deer respond to changes in the quality of the available forage and utilize those areas that best meet their needs. By mid-November, bucks are in a rut condition and focused on breeding. However, before that time (during our October general season), they focus on food and security, not on breeding.

A typical hillside of mule deer habitat in the Cascades over the growing season and through the fall will change from bright green in the spring and summer to light green to yellow, to orange, to red, to brown, then to bare branches. While we see changes in color, mule deer are perceiving changes in forage quality. The summer forage that supports deer and gives them the opportunity to produce young and grow antlers does not retain its high quality all year, so as it changes, so do the habitats that deer occupy.

While hunting on winter range is appealing because hunters can see long distances, the majority of deer will still be in areas of better quality forage and higher security. Most deer will be in thick cover where the food is better and they have protection. These are usually the brushy north facing slopes or at elevations much higher than typical open mule deer winter range.

Douglas County offers a different situation for deer hunters. Because of the private lands issue, hunters have less opportunity to pursue deer freely across habitats, as they have to pay attention to ownership boundaries. The drier nature of shrub-steppe habitat dictates that deer use those areas where forage quality remains higher longer while balancing the need for security. Optimal hunting areas will include a mixture of sagebrush cover or steep broken rocky terrain and adjacent agricultural fields for forage (mostly winter wheat and canola fields). Large expanses of sagebrush, while not providing the best forage, can give deer the security they need as well. In the broken coulee county, topography becomes security and riparian vegetation provides food resources. Deer in these areas often become experts at living in small, secure habitat pockets where they meet their needs and avoid hunters. While the majority of the county is private, over 46,226 acres are enrolled in WDFW's hunter access programs, including areas where hunters are free to access or access with written permission. Start scouting now for deer herds on private lands and opportunities to talk with landowners before the rush of other hunters descend on them days before the season starts. Many farmers are partial to allowing youth hunters in particular.

## High Buck Hunts

High Buck Hunts in the Cascade Range are one of the most popular opportunities provided in the district. Each year, scores of hunters don backpacks and ride pack strings into the heart of wilderness areas to pursue mule bucks and black bears. Within District 7, the Alpine Lakes Wilderness, Henry M. Jackson Wilderness, Glacier Peak Wilderness, and the Lake Chelan National Recreation Area define open High Buck Hunt units. The administrative boundaries of these wildernesses and the recreation area are the hunt boundaries. One misconception that continues to persist surrounds the Sawtooth Wilderness along the north shore of Lake Chelan. The Sawtooth Wilderness is closed to High Buck Hunt opportunity September 15-25, but open for early archery in GMU 243.

One change to be aware of for 2016 involves the Alpine Lakes Wilderness and the Enchantment Permit Area Zones. Any overnight trips into any of the five zones within the Enchantments require a permit from the U.S. Forest Service (USFS). Permits are distributed through a lottery drawing system and are highly sought after. In 2016, the Enchantment permit season dates are extended to October 31, encompassing archery, muzzleloader, modern firearms, and High Buck Hunt opportunities. Hunters who have hunted these zones in the past need to be aware that permitting dates have changed. Without a permit, they may not have access to previously hunted areas.

For more information on regulations surrounding use of the Enchantment Permit Area Zones, visit the Okanogan-Wenatchee web page listed below, or contact the forest directly.

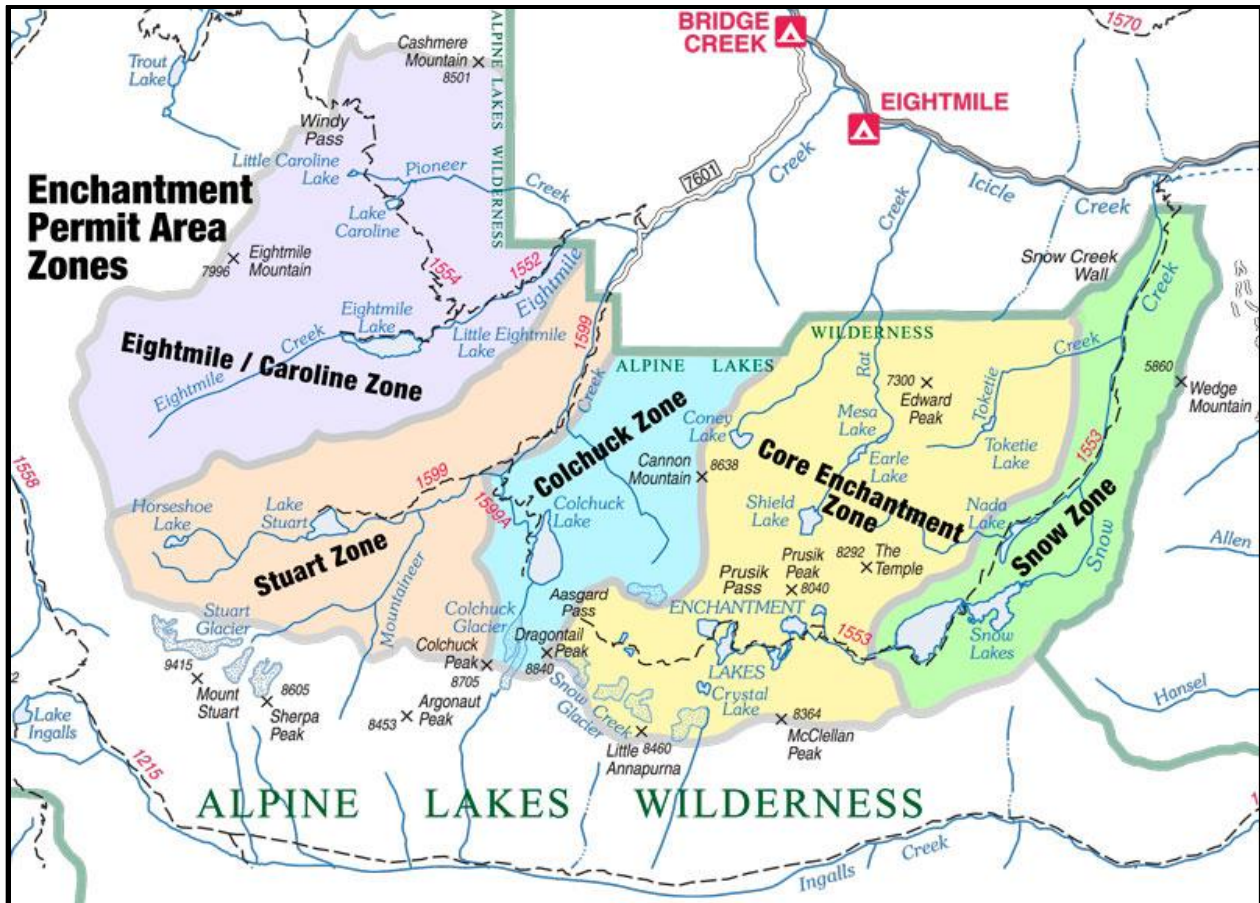
### **Enchantment Overnight Permit Season Expanded**

Release Date: Feb 1, 2016

The Wenatchee River Ranger District is expanding its limited entry, overnight permit season for the Enchantment Permit Area within the Alpine Lakes Wilderness in Washington.

**Starting this year, the limited entry overnight permit season for the Enchantment Permit Area will increase by six weeks to help manage increased visitor use and resulting resource damage at this popular destination. Permits for overnight stays will now be required from May 15 through October 31.**

[http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/okawen/passes-permits/recreation/?cid=fsbdev3\\_053607](http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/okawen/passes-permits/recreation/?cid=fsbdev3_053607)



A map of the Enchantment permit area zones within the alpine lakes wilderness on the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest.

## BLACK BEAR

Bear hunters in the Wenatchee District may have better opportunities in 2016 than last year. Drought conditions throughout the cascades have affected forage species, including berry production. With seasonal forage less available, bears will range farther in the search for food, and possibly down to lower elevations, making them more detectable. Bear populations in the district are monitored based on primarily harvest statistics and tooth data. In order to improve our ability to estimate and monitor bear numbers, WDFW's Carnivore Section initiated a black bear population study focused on both traditional trapping and collaring home range models based on GPS data and genetic modeling using hair snag data.





The project will help develop much better estimates of bear densities and provide information on the age class and sex structure of the population. As part of the study, hunters from the district are asked to submit a tissue sample along with a pre-molar tooth. The populations appear to be relatively stable within the district, with year-to-year habitat quality remaining constant. During years when huckleberry production is poor, bears will often be found searching larger areas for food. These increased forays expose them to higher rates of harvest when they encounter hunters.

Within Bear Management Unit (BMU) 6, the Wenatchee District is normally responsible for a significant amount of the harvest. In 2015, 230 bears were harvested from BMU 6. The BMU is comprised of 23 GMUs along the Central Cascades, and District 7 produced 38% of the harvest in 2015. An additional eight bears came out of GMU 243, which is included in BMU 5, bumping up the district total to 100 bears. GMU 245 is consistently a high producer of bears each year, and the area of focus for the current bear population study. Since 2001, BMU 6 averages 209 bears per year, with a success rate of 4.5% and an average percent of females in the harvest of 34%. Since 2001, the harvest of black bears has averaged roughly 65% males and 35% females, with roughly 4,900 hunters participating each year. While success relative to effort fluctuates from year to year, it is on an increasing trend since 2005 and points to a good upcoming season.

The vast majority of bears harvested in the district are taken during open deer and elk seasons. Dedicated bear hunters will often hunt early in the season, when bears are foraging on predictable annual berry crops and can be located more easily. The incidental harvest that occurs

during open deer and elk seasons is much more dependent on bear behavior and how widely they will have to travel for food.

There are no notable changes in black bear hunting opportunities for District 7 in 2016.

## COUGAR

Similar to black bears, the population monitoring cougar management comes primarily from harvest data, rather than intensive surveys. In 2015, eighteen (18) cougar were harvested in the district, with eight of the cougars taken during general hunting and another six cougars having been removed under a depredation or other situation. Two additional cougars were harvested out of the District 7 portion of the Columbia Basin. Six of the 18 cats harvested were females.

The opportunity to harvest a cougar in the Wenatchee District expanded under the new season structure in 2012, which remains in place for 2016. In Chelan County, there are four Hunt Areas, which were created by combining existing GMUs. Within each of these new hunt areas, a harvest guideline has been established based on cougar population biology. These new harvest guidelines increased the number of cougar that can be harvested in the county and across the state, while maintaining the integrity of the population.

A two part season is in place, allowing harvest during big game seasons under an early cougar season, and a later season for a more focused pursuit of cougar when conditions make hunting easier. If the harvest guideline is reached early, then a decision is made about opening the late season each year. Based on the harvest history in Chelan County, there is great opportunity to increase hunter participation in this hunt.

Douglas County also offers good cougar hunting opportunities. Most hunters will focus on the breaks of the Columbia River, Moses Coulee, and Rufus Woods Reservoir. This rough country allows cougars access to deer herds while providing them stalking cover. Successful hunters often wait for snow and track cats on foot. Badger (266), Moses Coulee (269), and Withrow (262) have consistent cougar harvest.

There are no notable changes in cougar hunting opportunities for District 7 in 2016.

## BIGHORN SHEEP



Sheep numbers have increased for both the Swakane and Chelan Butte. The Swakane herd survey accounted for 70 sheep in 2008, and increased to a minimum count of 132 sheep in 2014. The Chelan Butte herd produced a count of 74 sheep in 2008, increasing to a minimum count of 172 sheep in 2014. The Manson herd, which occupies the area along the north shore of Lake Chelan, has been the most difficult to monitor due to the lack of access and the rugged terrain the sheep inhabit. Over the past several years, there have been counts from 89 sheep to 119 sheep. Because population numbers have not swung widely, 120 or more sheep is that herd's minimum count.

For 2016, there are six California bighorn limited entry drawing permits issued for Chelan County. Since 2001, thirteen permits have been offered for sheep in the Swakane Unit. In those years, 14 sheep have been harvested (one was due to the inclusion of an auction hunt in 2002). A local resident under a drawing permit harvested the world record California bighorn from the Swakane herd in 2010. Since 2005, the Manson Unit has provided two drawing permits per year, and over those nine years 25 sheep were harvested. The additional sheep were harvested by hunters acquiring auction or raffle tags. The Chelan Butte herd has been hunted since 2010 and provides one drawing permit each year. In 2016, two permits have been offered. During the first four years, five rams were harvested.



Overwinter survival for adult sheep remains high. Mortality of lambs for the year is characteristic of most sheep populations, where lambs suffer the highest rates of mortality during their first year of life, and the highest mortality of the year immediately after birth. Lamb counts were 27, 25, and 16 for the Swakane, Chelan Butte, and Manson herds. Sightability and conditions play a large role in these counts. With two herds increasing and one herd stable, the hunting opportunities should increase in the future to keep pace with the increase in rams.

A notable change in bighorn sheep hunting opportunities for District 7 in 2016 is the addition of four permit opportunities for hunters with disabilities. Two permits for only ewes are available, and two permits for young rams. Chelan Butte's terrain allows WDFW to offer opportunity for hunters with disabilities in one of the few areas in Washington where access might allow harvest and the population has animals to offer.

Hunters selected under these drawings are encouraged to contact District 7 for additional information. All hunters harvesting a bighorn sheep in Washington State are required to have the horn sets measured and plugged by WDFW.





## MOUNTAIN GOATS



While mountain goats occur in many higher elevation areas in Chelan County, they are currently only hunted along Lake Chelan where their population has increased over the years.

Opportunistic road surveys done in portions of the district indicate goats are increasing in number in areas where they were historically hunted. More formal survey efforts are planned to establish numbers and evaluate hunt opportunities.

In the Icicle Creek area, a high count of 57 goats was recorded between 2010 and 2014. In the Tumwater Canyon area, a high count of 33 was recorded. In the Nason Ridge area, there was a high count of 22, and in the White River, a high count of eight.

The Lake Chelan population is surveyed via boat by the Chelan PUD each winter during twelve surveys from late November through March. During the 2013-2014 survey, a high count of 190 mountain goats was made, with a minimum of 95 goats on each of the South and North Chelan units. Counts are made along both the north and south shores of the lake. Year to year counts vary widely due to snow accumulation and weather conditions along the lake. In general, during heavy snow years, goats concentrate in higher densities along the lake to winter, providing a better opportunity to observe them.

Three mountain goat tags were issued for the Wenatchee District under limited entry drawings this year. Since 2001, 21 drawing permits have been issued for the Chelan North, and 15 goats have been harvested. Four of the 15 were female goats. A single permit was offered on the Chelan South, with the first goat being harvested in 2013. Every effort is made to educate hunters so they will focus their harvest on male rather than female goats. A significant amount of research work done on mountain goats in the United States and Canada indicates that populations with sustained rates of harvest of females will decline significantly over time.

There are no notable changes in mountain goat hunting opportunities for District 7 in 2016.

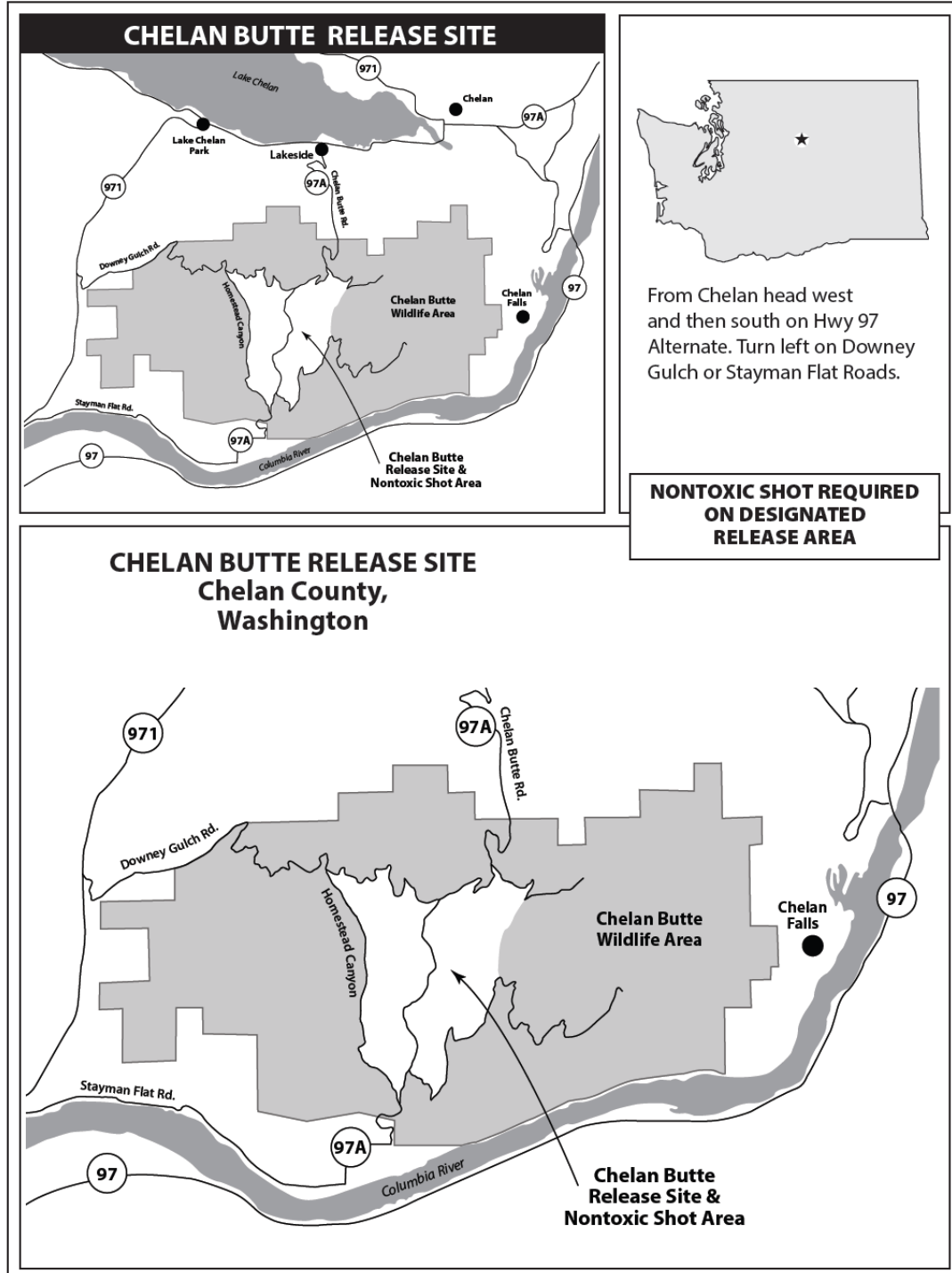
Hunters selected under these drawing are encouraged to contact District 7 for additional information and to bring horn sets in to be measured. In addition, hunters will be asked to help collect biological samples from harvested goats this year to form a baseline of knowledge about mountain goat diseases in Washington State.

## PHEASANT

The Wenatchee District does not have the reputation as a destination pheasant hunting area in the state, but local hunters have harvested from 1,500 to 3,000 birds each year since 2001. On average, both Douglas and Chelan counties produce roughly the same numbers of pheasants each year. In 2015, the district harvested 1,024 pheasants. Douglas County offers a couple of locations where wild populations of pheasants sustain themselves, both on public and private land. Hunters should focus on areas with a mixture of native shrubsteppe habitat, Conservation Reserve Program (appear as grasslands), and wet meadows/wetlands. Your first clue will be weedy and tall vegetation on the roadsides, which provides good cover. Good pheasant hunts can be found in Foster Creek (260), St. Andrews (254), and Big Bend (248).

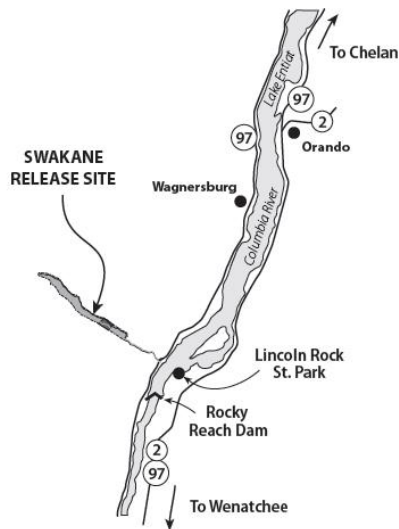
Hunters interested in hunting pheasant release sites on the Chelan Butte Wildlife Area and the Swakane Wildlife Area should visit the WDFW hunting web site for more information. The Colockum Wildlife Area release site is currently closed while vegetation recovers from the impacts of a recent wildfire. For more information, see the [Eastern Washington Pheasant Enhancement Program](#).

## REGION 2



## REGION 2

### SWAKANE RELEASE SITE



To reach the **Swakane Wildlife Area** and release site, travel north from Wenatchee on Alt. Hwy 97. It follows the Columbia River on the west side toward the town of Chelan. To find the release site, head west up the Swakane Creek Road.

**NONTOXIC SHOT REQUIRED  
ON DESIGNATED  
RELEASE AREA**

### SWAKANE RELEASE SITE Chelan County, Washington





## QUAIL

District 7 produces some of the best quail hunting in the state. However, harvest in 2015 proved somewhat lower than average, with a total harvest of 12,577. Harvest numbers for Chelan County have been consistently higher than Douglas County.

Conditions going into the 2015-16 winter were harder, and over-winter survival of quail in Chelan and Douglas counties may have declined. The amount of insect production this year may have positive effects on broods, as grasshoppers and other insects are important. Production appears stable this year and harvest should be similar to last year. There were good fall and summer conditions, and a relatively mild winter, especially in Douglas County, so numbers may see an upswing. While no surveys are conducted, field staff members have noted larger and more numerous broods this year, which should make for a promising hunt.

Public lands can be tough places to find larger coveys well into the season. To improve success, hunters should seek out those areas without easy access and spend some time seeking permissions from private landowners.

## GRAY PARTRIDGE

2015 was a much better year for huns, with 1,084 birds taken. Douglas County provided more birds than Chelan. Since 2007, the high is 654 and the low 114. Within the district, gray partridge are encountered and harvested more in Douglas County. They occur at low density, with coveys dispersed across larger areas. Look to fields enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program with lots of grass cover extending into draws, these are often a good place to find coveys.

Covering a wide range of cover types is the best way to locate coveys. While most gray partridge are taken while hunting other species, with a little focus and dedication, you can be successful hunting for huns. Visit the [GoHunt](#) application on the WDFW web site and find areas in Douglas County enrolled in the hunting access program. Snow depths were light over the past winter, indicating that over-winter survival may have been good and gray partridge numbers stable.

## CHUKAR

More chukar are shot in District 7 than any other district in the state. However, harvest numbers have been declining in recent years. Harvest of chukar has been declining since 2006, but so has the number of hunters and the number of days spent chukar hunting (this may be due to winter weather conditions). Since 2001, the ratio of chukar harvested per days hunted has increased, indicating that birds are on hills if hunters are willing to chase them. In 2015, there was a

harvest of 4,638 birds, which marks a significant harvest increase. Douglas County accounted for almost 3,400 of those birds.

Winter conditions were more normal on average, with heavier snow accumulation in winter habitat. The higher snow levels may affect chukar hunting later in the season by pushing birds down where they are more accessible to hunters. Production appears to be good this spring, with insect production being very good.

Opportunities for chukar hunting are numerous within the district due to the large amount of habitat that falls under public ownership. The breaks of the Columbia River provide the majority of the Chukar habitat, along with areas adjacent to Banks Lake and Moses Coulee. On the Chelan County side of the Columbia River, BLM, USFS, WADNR, and WDFW all control lands that provide chukar-hunting opportunities. Along the Douglas County beaks, almost all the appropriate chukar habitat falls under private ownership, and landowner permission is required.

Chukar hunting falls into two distinct seasons: without snow and with snow. While trying to negotiate chukar habitat with snow and ice on the ground can be hazardous, there is no doubt that birds become concentrated following the accumulation of snow. There should be an increase in chukar numbers in the district, helped along by fall forage productivity and relatively mild winter snow conditions at lower elevations.

## FOREST GROUSE



Harvest has remained steady in recent years, with 2,707 birds, but has declined by half since 2007. Three species of forest grouse occupy the Wenatchee District: blue grouse, spruce grouse, and ruffed grouse. There are a few areas in Douglas County where forest grouse are regularly found. However, their densities are relatively low and few hunters concentrate on them specifically. The majority of harvest is incidental during other hunting.

Within Chelan County, forest grouse occupy habitat dominated by coniferous and riparian forests. Ruffed grouse can be found in healthy riparian forests and aspen stands at the margin of timbered habitat, and blue grouse will use timbered stringers that extend down into the shrub-steppe. Spruce grouse are restricted to higher elevation conifer forests, usually above the distribution of ponderosa pine.

Hunters interested in forest grouse will improve their chances by searching out areas where fewer hunters concentrate. Popular road systems can provide early season hunting. However, due to the numbers of hunters and the vulnerability of hatch-year birds, they often dry up quickly. Chelan County has a relatively limited road system within grouse habitat, and dedicated

hunters know where they are, so hunters can increase the productive length of their season by hunting areas on foot away from roads and the bulk of the other hunters.

## DOVE

Hunting success will be similar to the past several seasons within the district. Success rates were increasing over the past few seasons then decreased again last year. The harvest was 2,854 birds last fall from 233 hunters. Dove count routes have shown declines over time, with numbers down again this year.

Hunters should secure hunting opportunities by contacting growers and getting permission. Look to areas near wetlands, agricultural fields, and orchards where birds find both roosting cover and food later in the season. The amount and distribution of CRP (Conservation Reserve Program) fields has increased in Douglas County over the past few years, with new seed mixes providing more diversity in forage within stands. Scouting for these habitats can be a productive way to find new unexploited hunting areas.

## TURKEY

Turkey densities in the district are relatively sparse, but populations appear to be stable in Chelan County and may be increasing in the northern portions of Douglas County. Hunters should expect population numbers and harvest success similar to other years. Surveys over the past 3-4 years indicate that turkey numbers are stable. A low level of harvest occurs on public lands, with local hunters being the most successful, as densities are low and finding seasonal habitat is important. Harvest rates are consistent, averaging around 45 toms each year.

In Chelan County, the number of turkeys the landscape can support is determined primarily on the amount and availability of wintering habitat under typical snow depths. When winter snow depths reach 20 inches or more, wild turkeys have a difficult time making it through the winter. In areas where turkey can utilize ranches, barnyards, and farms of winter forage, they can show significant survival over winter. Chelan County is limited in its availability of such habitat, and as such, the number of turkeys in the county seems to remain at a stable level.

Hunters should look to several of the more consistent turkey producing areas for hunting opportunities, such as the Colockum Wildlife Area. The Stemilt Basin outside of Wenatchee, canyons off the Wenatchee River from the Columbia River, and west through the town of Plain have low densities of turkeys. Most of these areas are private down low, but hunters can head up forest roads onto Forest Service land to find good turkey hunting opportunities. Remember to scout early and get permission to hunt private lands.



## WATERFOWL



Local production of waterfowl is up from previous years based on annual surveys. Hunters should have good opportunities in traditional areas and where permission to access ponds and lakes can be secured. Hunting along the Columbia River is usually consistent, but dictated by local weather patterns.

Most of the harvest in Chelan County (4,465 ducks for 2015) is focused along the Columbia River. In Douglas County, the Columbia River is the primary waterfowl hunting area as well. However, northern Douglas County has a concentration of small lands and ponds that hold waterfowl. The county produced a harvest of 9,648 ducks in 2015. As in most years, the success of the season depends on the timing of migration through the area. This year, indicators point to good opportunities during the fall migration.

Local production of Canada goose has increased recently, leading to the re-establishment of the September season. In 2016, the season dates are September 12-13. Regular season hunting harvest has been declining, with numbers since 2002 normally under 2,000 geese harvested, and since 2008, under 1,500. Expect a similar season in 2016.

For an excellent introduction to waterfowl hunting, see [Let's Go Waterfowling](#).

## HUNTER ACCESS

Hunter Access Program lands in District 7 are predominately in Douglas County, where the majority of rural private lands occur. Chelan County, while having great public land opportunity, does not offer as much in the form of private lands hunting. WDFW lands personnel work closely with agricultural producers to provide access for hunting. As a result, thousands of acres in Douglas County can be hunted throughout the season. Access lands are marked with signs displaying contact information, and many areas are listed on WDFW's GoHunt mapping program.

	Douglas County	Chelan County
Feel Free to Hunt	6,4945	0
Hunt By Written Permission	39,732	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>46,226</b>	<b>0</b>

Acres of private lands enrolled in WDFW's Hunting Access Program in District 7 for 2015.

	2010		2011		2012		2013		2014		2015	
Species	Harvest	Hunters	Harvest	Hunters	Harvest	Hunters	Harvest	Hunters	Harvest	Hunters	Harvest	Hunters
Quail	15,088	1,702	13,169	1,658	9,874	1,162	12,494	1,450	13,491	1,356	12,577	1,431
Chukar	2,452	1,093	2,201	846	1,210	589	999	781	1,783	760	4,638	995
Mourning Dove	5,979	447	3,506	402	2,957	285	4,058	318	3,337	296	2,854	233
Forest Grouse	3,290	2,522	2,418	1,412	2,758	1,592	2,320	1,284	2,284	1,181	2,707	1,210
Pheasant	1,768	892	1,506	827	1,563	802	956	731	1,350	671	1,024	601
Gray Partridge	444	262	411	279	1,151	330	438	253	549	270	1,084	317
Duck	13,947	998	14,528	1,123	14,777	1,055	14,451	1,136	13,877	981	14,113	914
Canada Goose	1,252	519	1,082	526	1,774	525	1,340	626	1,419	408	1,786	431
Sept Canada Goose	*	*	*	*	0	0	531	66	269	103	71	57
Cottontail Rabbit	397	171	375	127	346	158	469	153	237	173	294	80
Snowshoe Hare	0	18	48	47	0	10	109	66	11	11	11	34
Snipe	55	18	5	11	0	7	0	0	196	11	62	8

**Table 3.** District 7 (Wenatchee) upland and small game harvest, and hunter participation, 2010 through 2015.

\* No September Canada goose season was offered during 2009-2012. It opened again in 2013.

## ONLINE TOOLS AND MAPS

### **Washington Department of Natural Resources**

Southeast Region

713 Bowers Road

Ellensburg, WA 98926-9301

509-925-8510

509-925-8522

[southeast.region@dnr.wa.gov](mailto:southeast.region@dnr.wa.gov)

<http://www.dnr.wa.gov>

*Public Lands Information Available*

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### **U.S. Department of the Interior**

#### **Bureau of Land Management**

Wenatchee Office

915 N. Walla Walla

Wenatchee, WA 98801

509-665-2100

[BLM OR WN Mail@blm.gov](mailto:BLM_OR_WN_Mail@blm.gov)

<http://www.blm.gov/or/districts/spokane/index.php>

*Public Lands Information Available*

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### **Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest Headquarters**

215 Melody Lane

Wenatchee, WA 98801

(509) 664-9200

<http://www.fs.usda.gov/okawen/>

*Public Lands Information Available*

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#### **Chelan Ranger District**

428 W. Woodin Avenue

Chelan, WA 98816

(509) 682-4900

#### **Entiat Ranger District**

2108 Entiat Way

Entiat, WA 98822

(509) 784-4700

#### **Wenatchee River Ranger District**

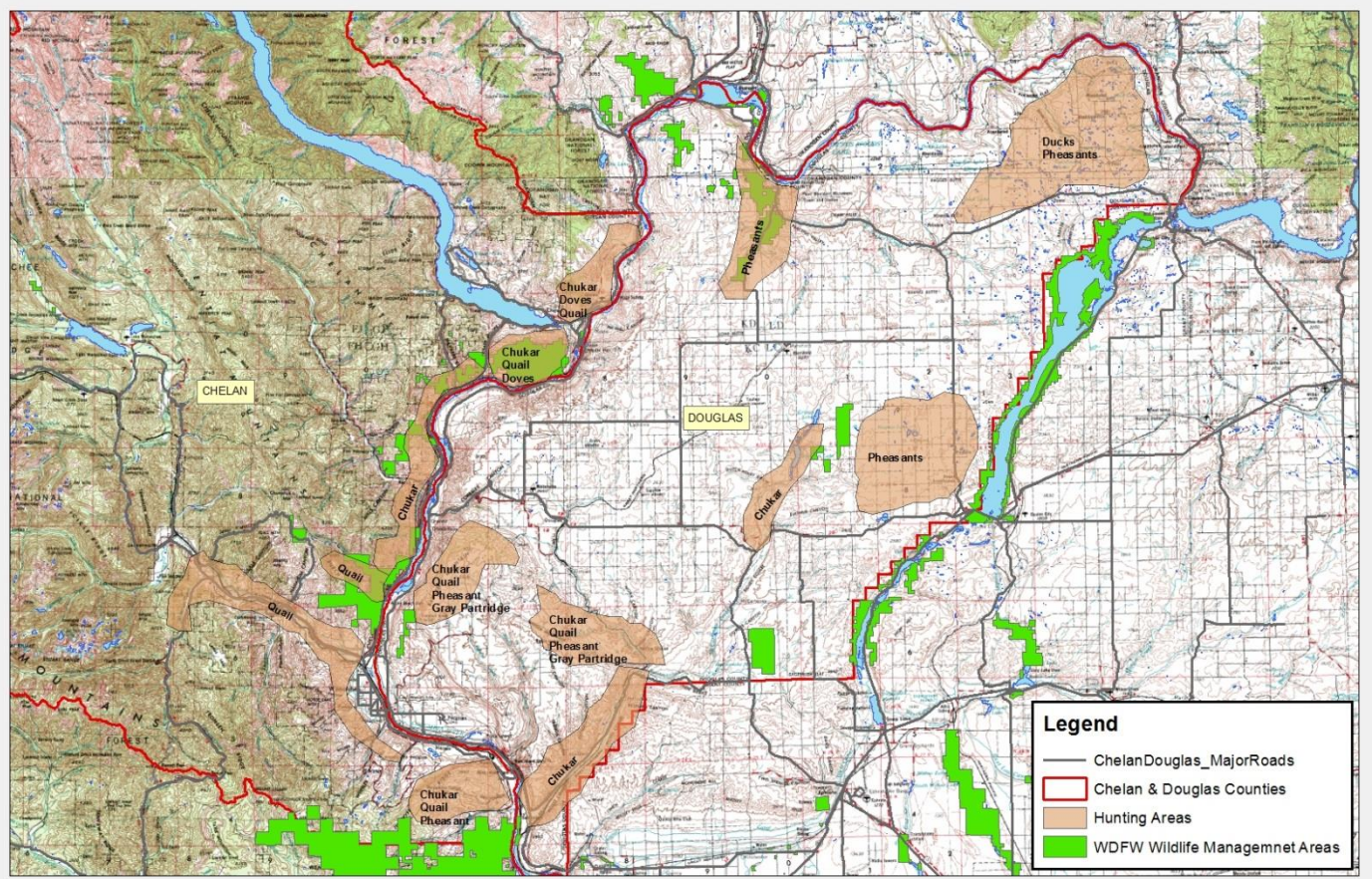
600 Sherbourne

Leavenworth, WA 98826

(509) 548-2550



## FIGURES



**Figure 1.** Upland game hunting areas in the Wenatchee District.

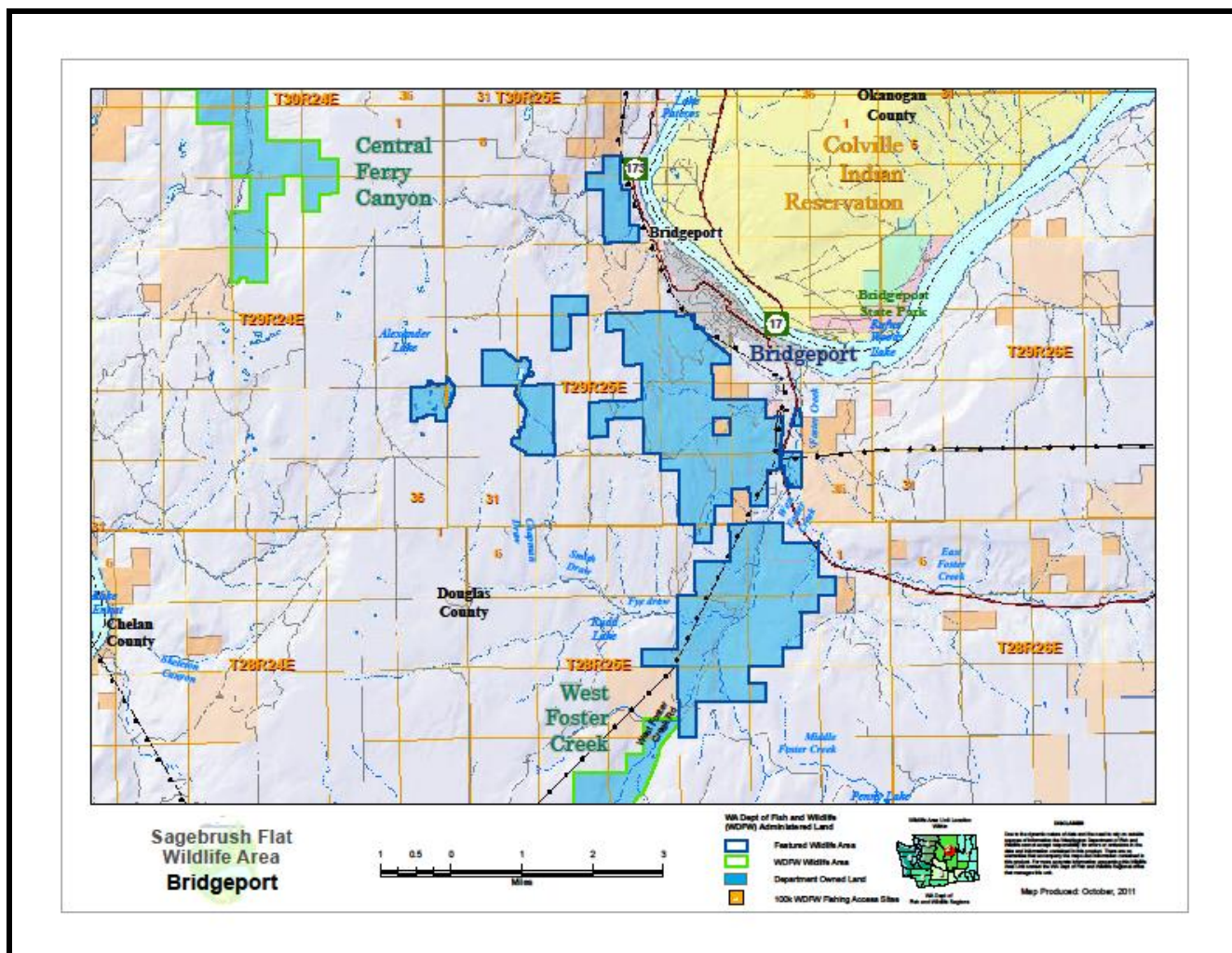


Figure 2. Map of the WDFW Bridgeport Unit, Douglas County.



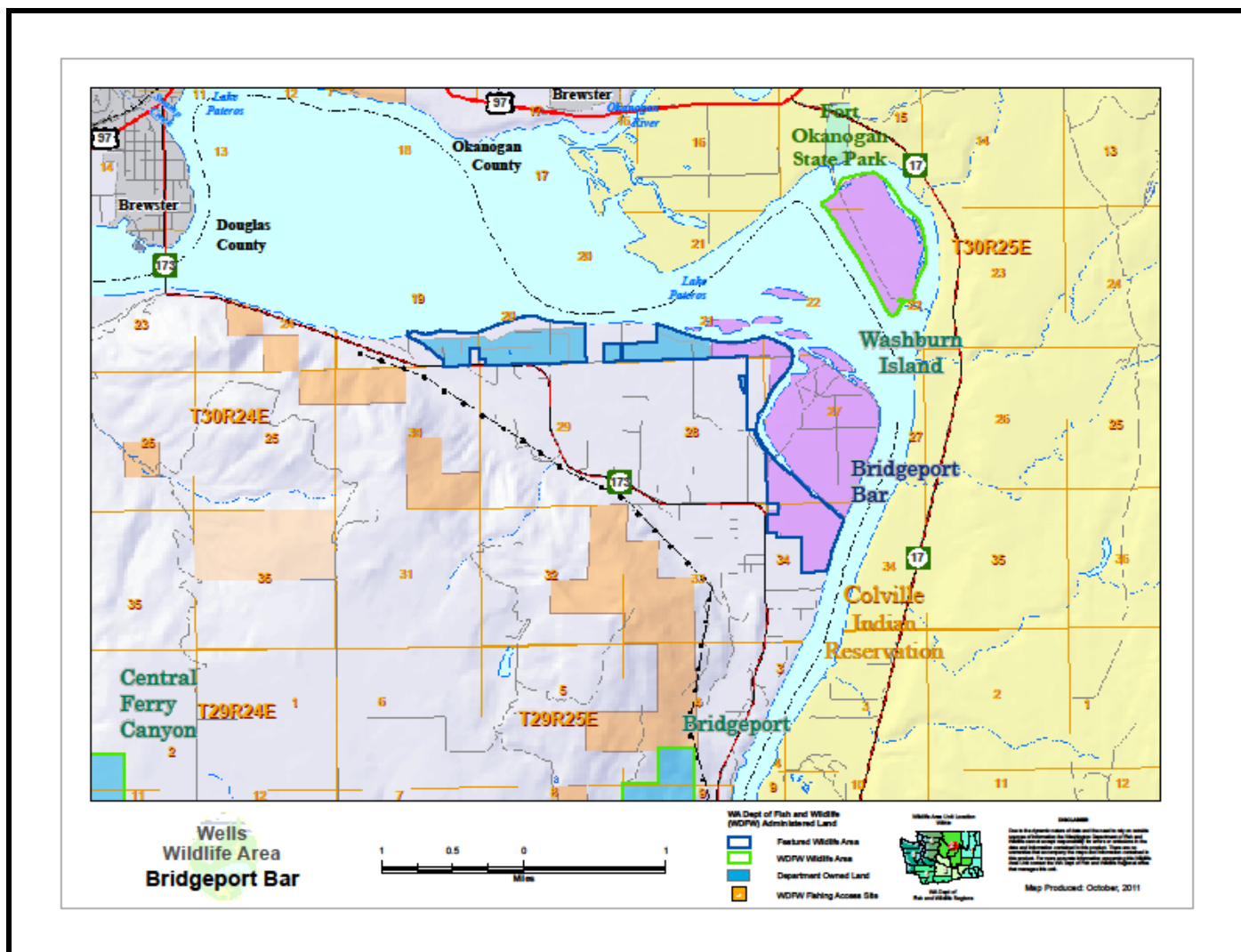
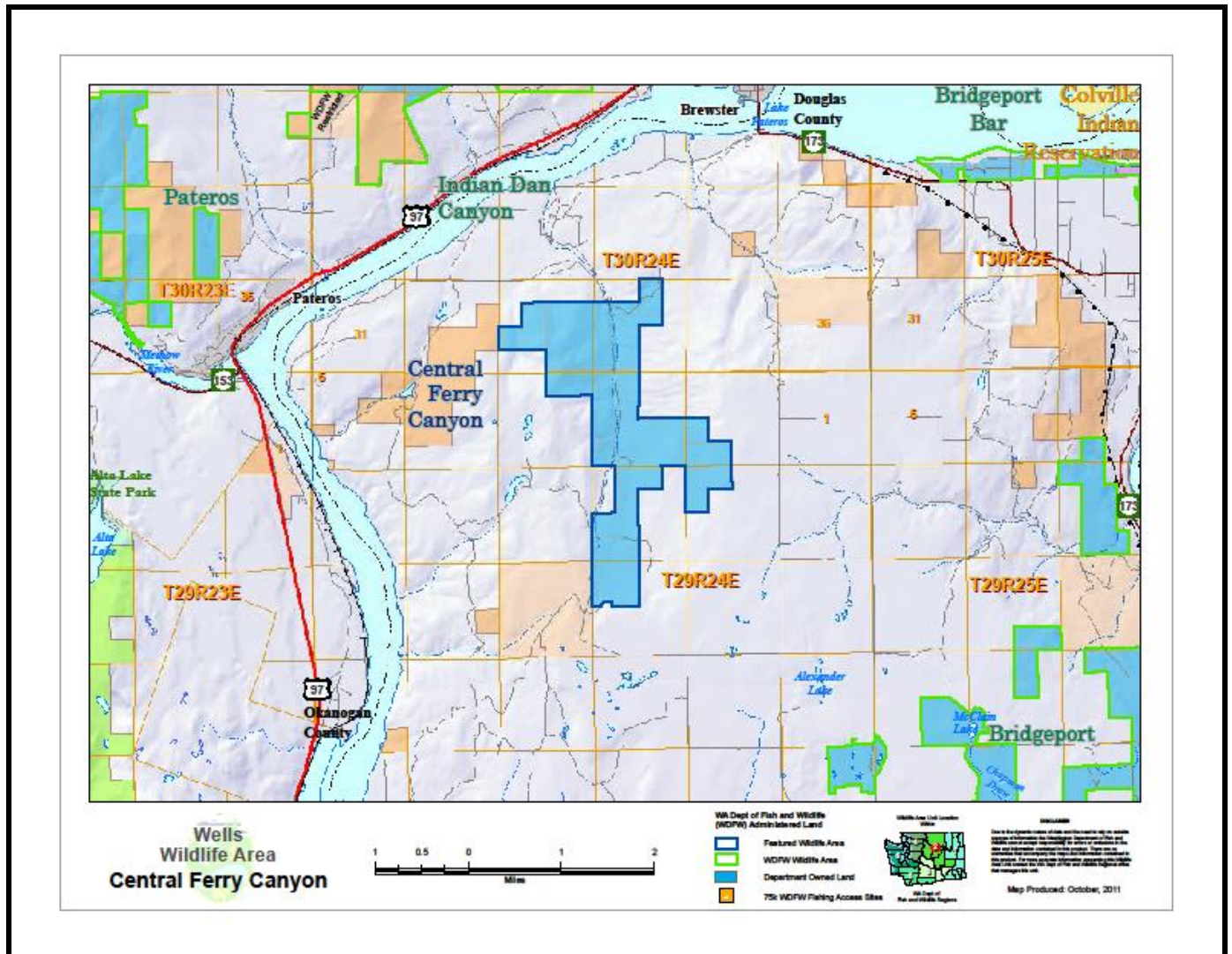


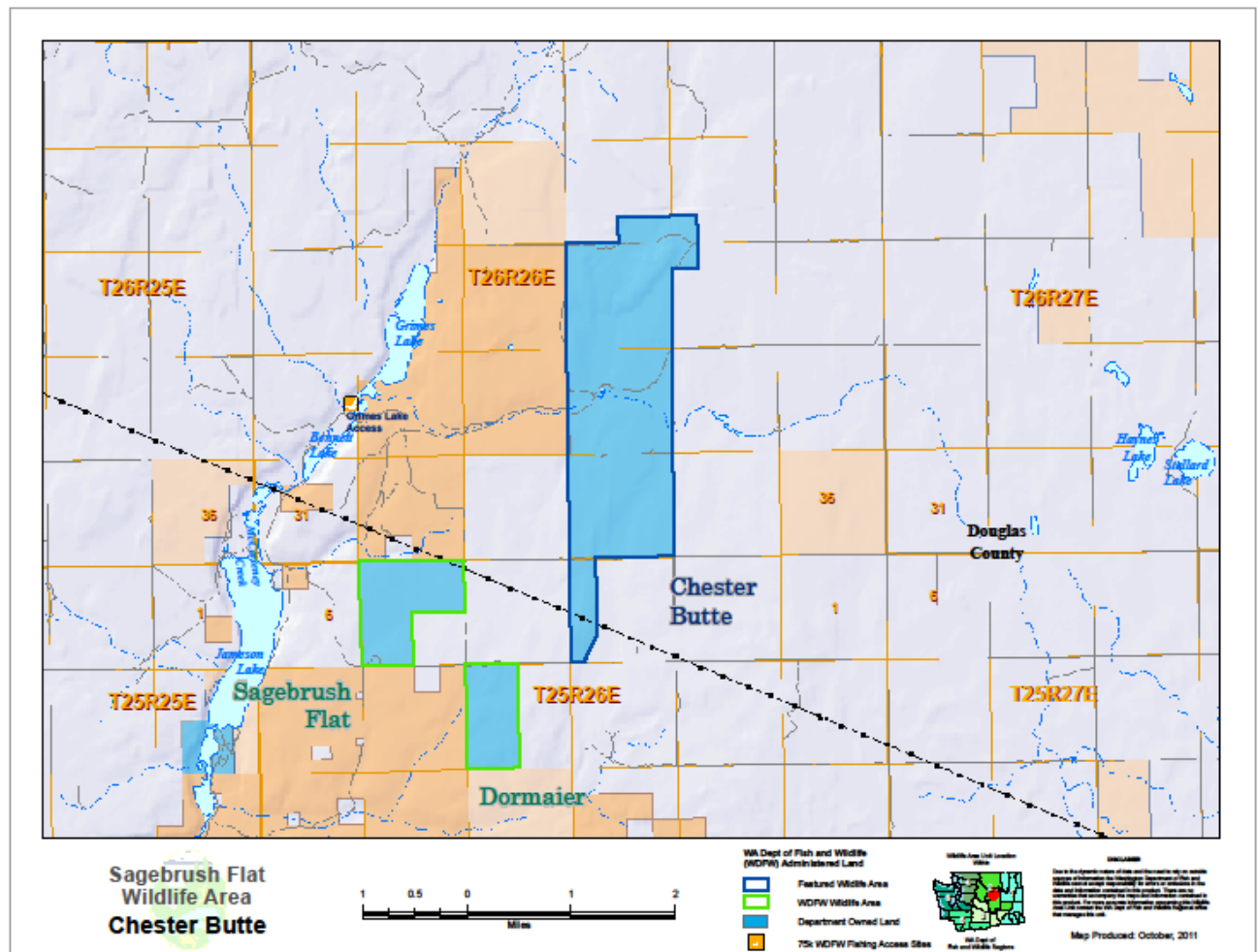
Figure 3. Map of the WDFW Bridgeport Bar Unit, Douglas County.



**Figure 4.** Map of the WDFW Central Ferry Canyon Unit, Douglas County (extensive habitat loss due to wildfire in 2012).







**Figure 6.** Map of the WDFW Chester Butte and Dormaier Units, Douglas County.

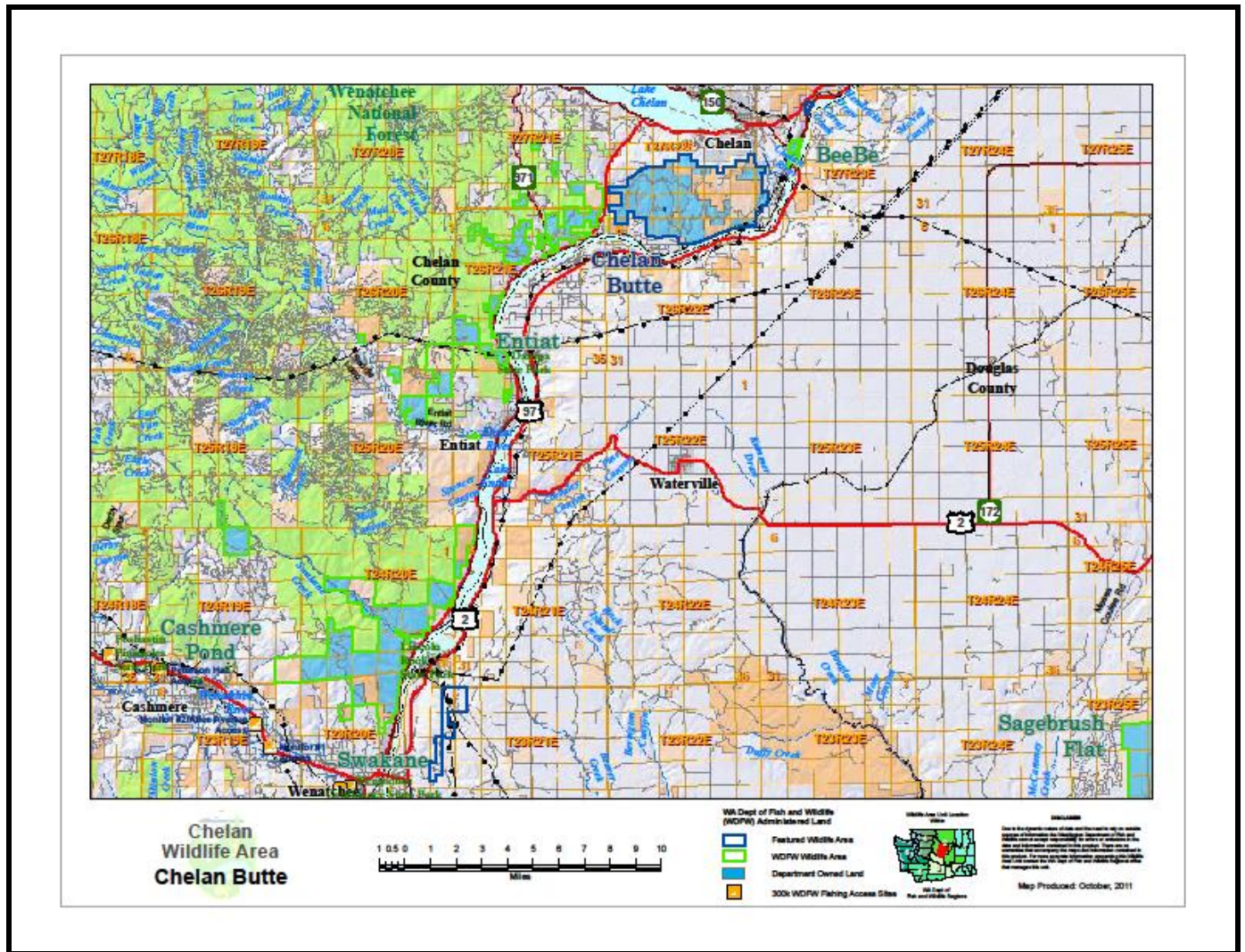
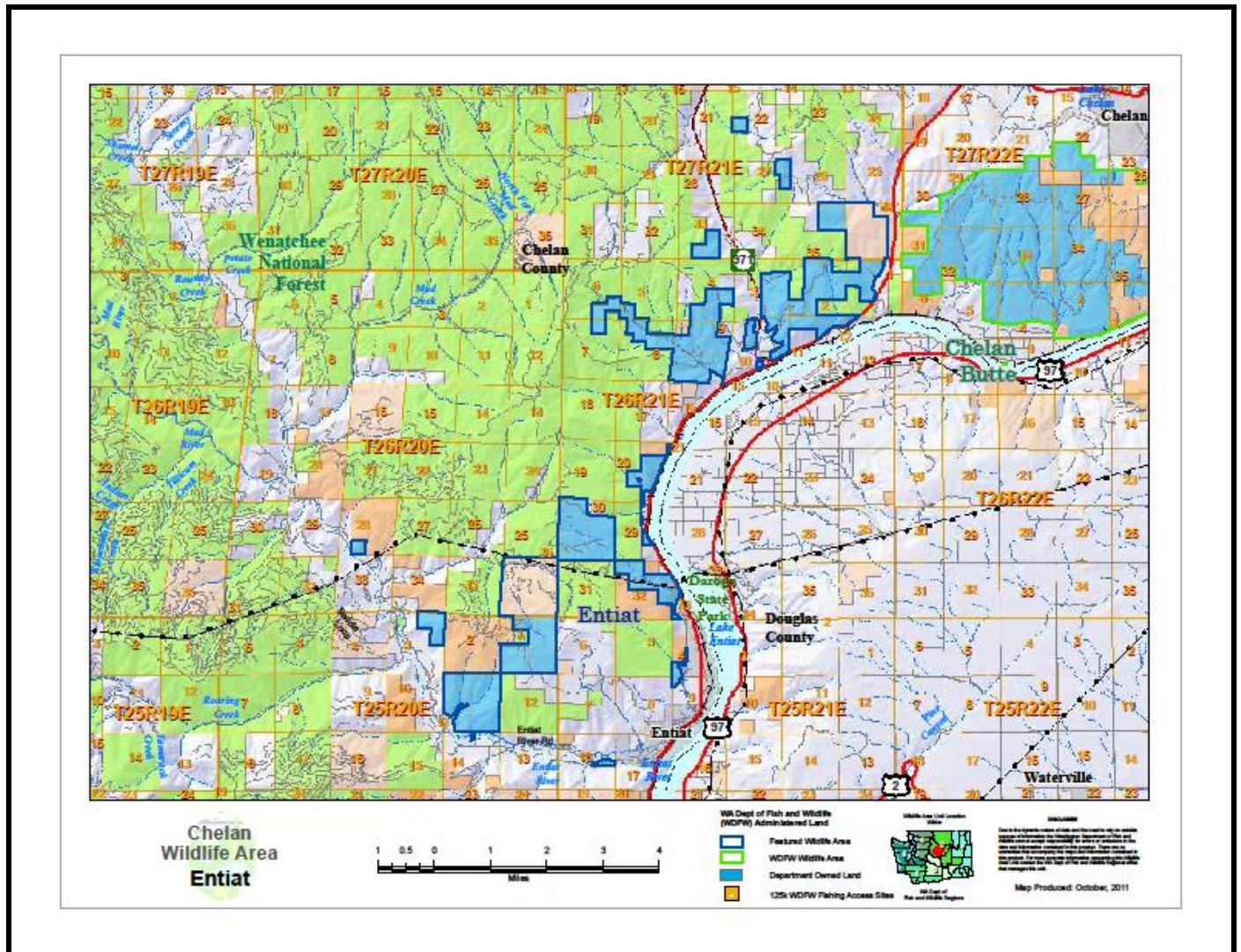


Figure 7. Map of the WDFW Chelan Butte Unit, Chelan County.





**Figure 8.** Map of the WDFW Entiat Unit, Chelan County.



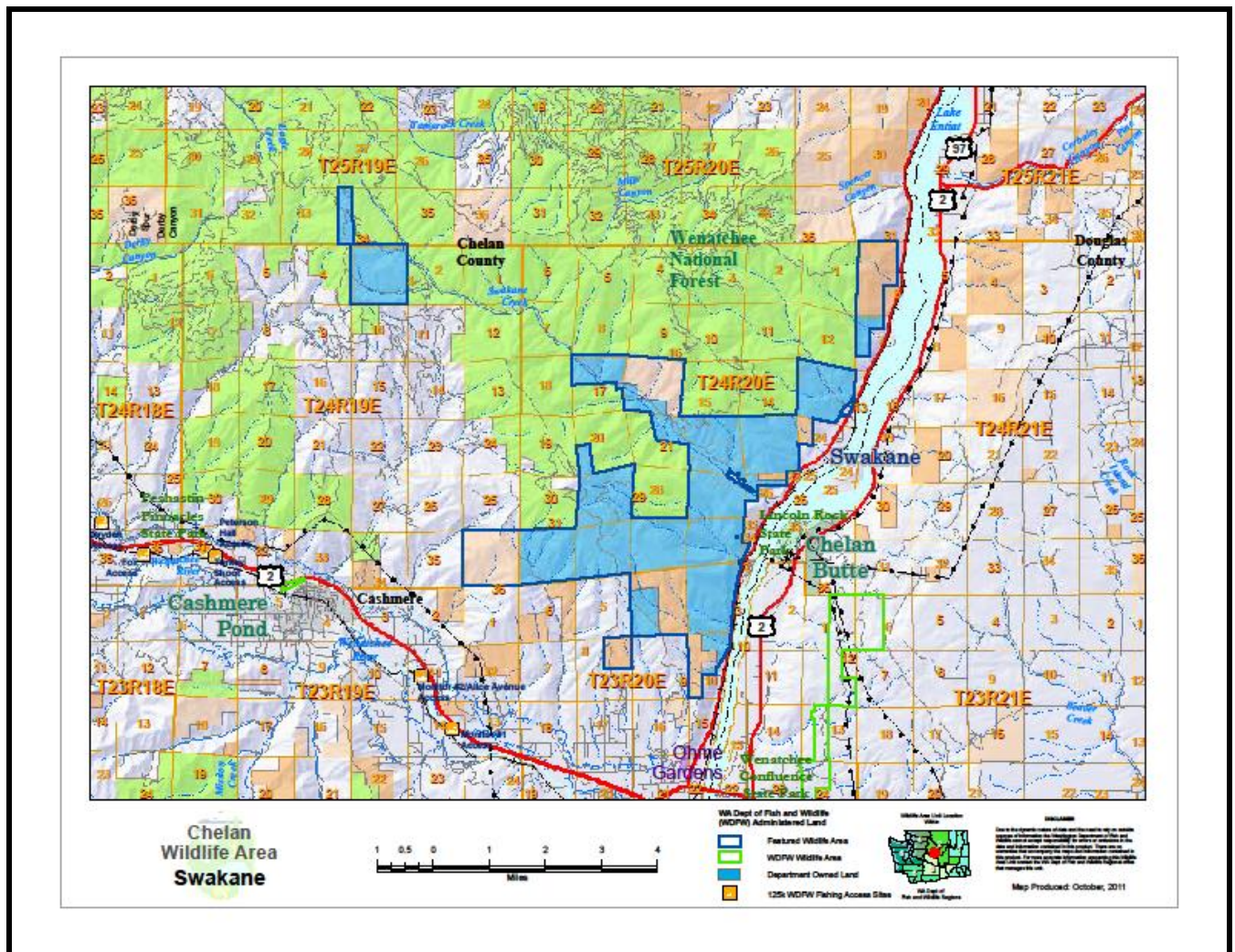
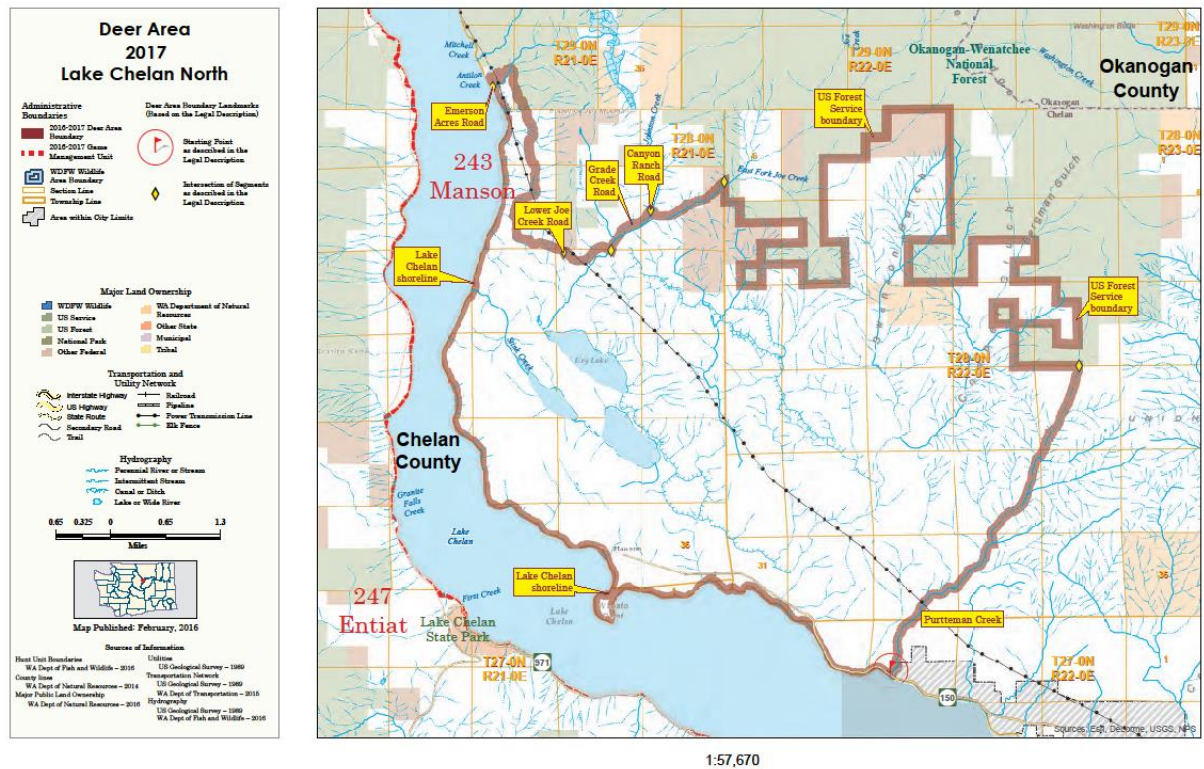
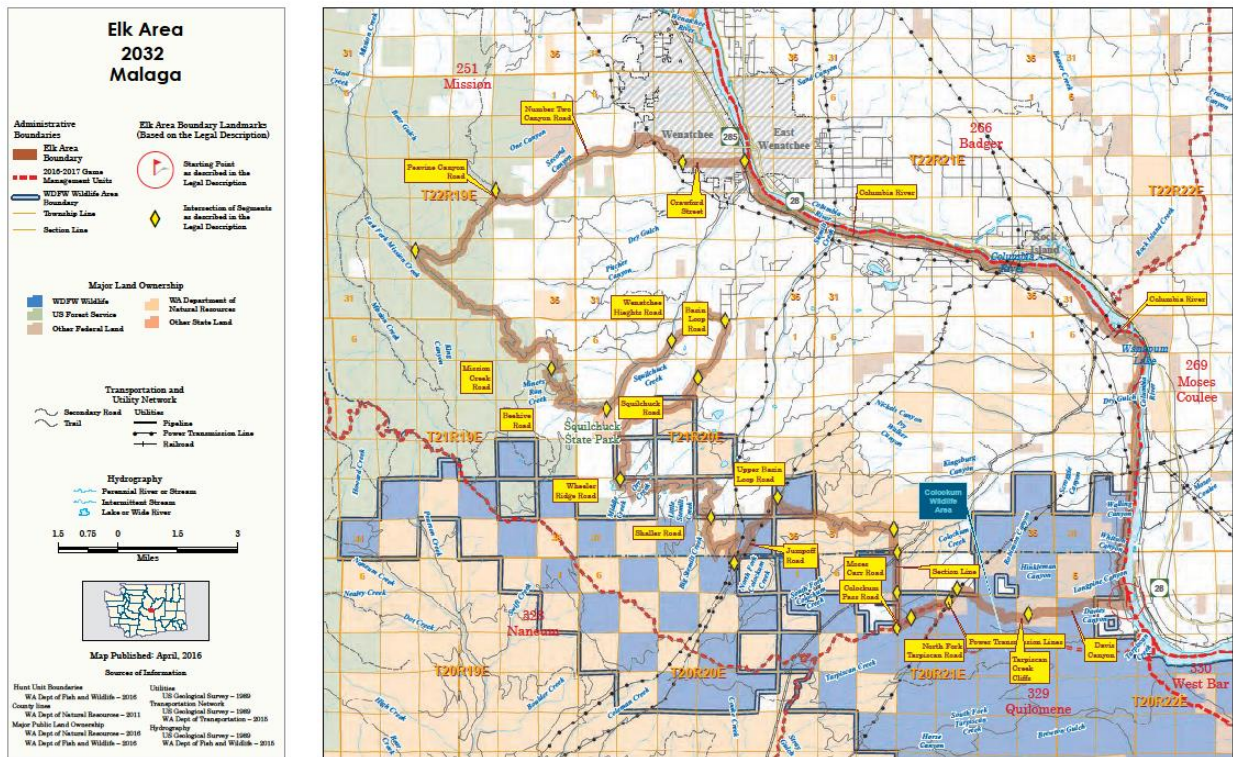


Figure 9. Map of the WDFW Swakane Unit, Chelan County.



**Figure 10.** Map of the WDFW Deer Area 2017, Lake Chelan North, Chelan County.





**Figure 11.** Map of the WDFW Elk Area 2032, Malaga, Chelan County.

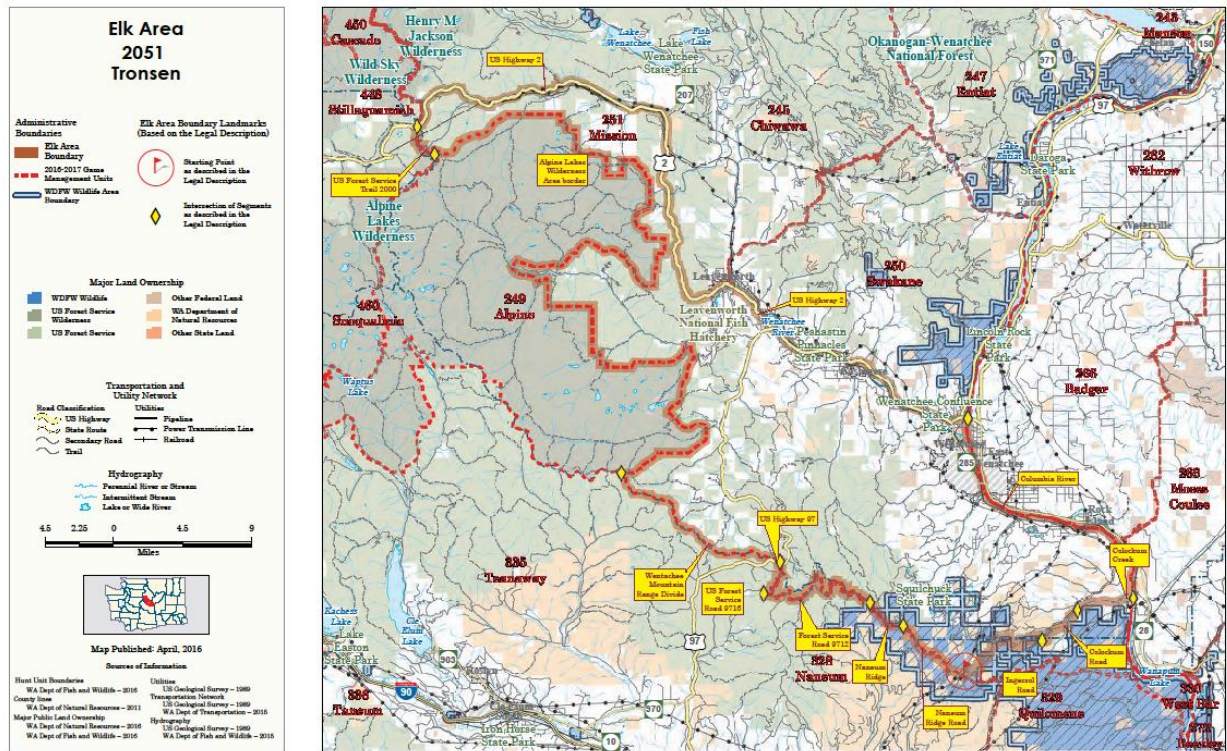


Figure 12. Map of the WDFW Elk Area 2051, Tronsen, Chelan County.